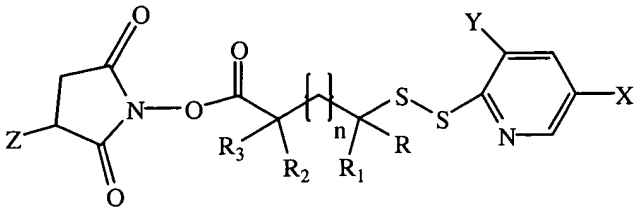
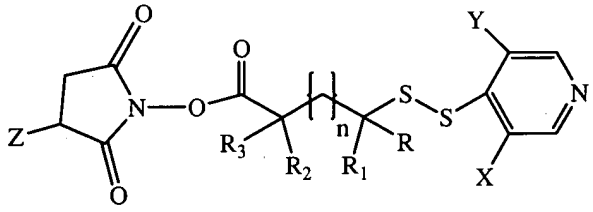
AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Amend paragraph [010] on page 5 as follows:

The invention also provides a cross-linker of formula (I) or (II):



(I)

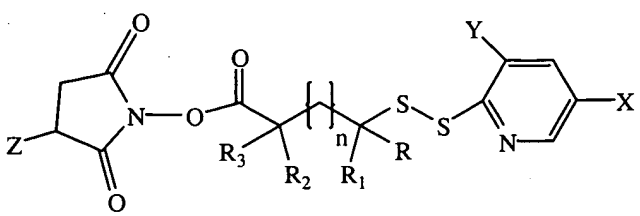


(II)

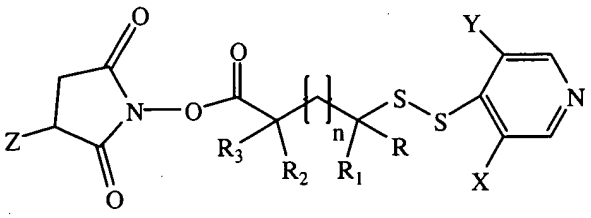
wherein R, R_1, R_2 and R_3 are the same or different and are H, methyl, ethyl, or linear, branched or cyclic alkyl having 3 to 6 carbon atoms, n is 0 or an integer from 1 to 4, X and Y are the same or different and are H, $CONR_4R_5$ or NO_2, provided that X and Y are not both H at the same time, R_4 and R_5 are the same or different and are each H, methyl, ethyl, n-propyl, isopropyl, n-butyl, sec-butyl, iso-butyl or tert-butyl, and Z is $SO_3^-M^+$ or H, wherein M^+ represents a metal ion or a tetra alkyl ammonium ion, provided that when X and/or Y is NO_2, Z is not H.

Amend paragraph [024] bridging pages 9 and 10 as follows:

Preferably, the cross-linkers are compounds of the formula (I) or (II) below:



(I)



(II)

wherein R, R_1, R_2 and R_3 are the same or different and are H, methyl, ethyl, or linear, branched or cyclic alkyl having 3 to 6 carbon atoms, n is 0 or an integer from 1 to 4, X and Y are the same or different and are H, $CONR_4R_5$ or NO_2, provided that X and Y are not both H at the same time, R4 and R5 are the same or different and are each H, methyl, ethyl, n-propyl, isopropyl, n-butyl, sec-butyl, iso-butyl or tert-butyl, and Z is $SO_3^-M^+$ or H, wherein M^+ represents a metal ion or a tetra alkyl ammonium ion, provided that when X and/or Y is NO_2, Z is not H.